

last speaker, the gentleman from California. If he does not see enough lobbyists on the floor of this Congress or at the edges of this Congress, it is because in too many cases this new Republican Congress, instead of moving along fast enough, has moved along too slowly and has actually turned over the operation of some of the key parts of this Congress to the lobbyists.

In one case, in which I personally observed, the staff attorney for our committee was unable to respond to questions from members of the committee without turning over his shoulder and getting the answers from the lobbyists for the bill that was under consideration.

In one committee, the new Republican majority staff actually turned over computers, paid for with public expense, to the lobbyists who were writing the legislation. In another committee, a Republican lobbyist actually took the dais along with the Members of Congress that were considering the measure.

In fact, it has gotten so bad, a recent column in the Wall Street Journal was entitled "Special Interest or Feasting at the Congressional Trough." It is because we have not made enough progress in controlling lobby domination of this Congress and continued to not have sufficient change in this Congress that it is important today that opportunity has actually knocked a second time.

Mr. Speaker, thanks to the leadership, to the continued leadership of my colleague and friend, the gentleman from Texas [Mr. BRYANT], who spoke a few minutes earlier, we will have an opportunity today to consider again lobby reform and a gift ban. The first time that opportunity knocked at this Congress was that old Congress last year, and the Congress responded at that time in a bipartisan response, almost a three to one vote, in favor of a gift ban backed by Congressman BRYANT.

Today we will have an opportunity to consider a similar measure as opportunity knocks a second time. It is time that this Congress accepted that opportunity; and, indeed, Members on both sides of the aisle have said they want a gift ban. In October 1994, last year, on "Meet the Press," then-Congressman NEWT GINGRICH said, I quote, "I am prepared to pass a bill that bans lobbyists from dealing with Members of Congress in terms of gifts."

Unfortunately, Mr. GINGRICH did not say when he was prepared to pass that bill, but the when should be now. It should be today.

Since 1994, the Senate has, this summer, approved the very type of gift ban measure that it killed last year. It has approved a measure to plug the loopholes in an almost 50 year old lobby registration act, and it has approved a gift ban that is quite similar to that that Congressman BRYANT offered last year. It is long past time, in view of that Senate action, for this House to

act and send a message to those who come bearing gifts and bearing golf junkets, that things have really, in fact, changed in this Congress.

It is time to let the people back home, whom we represent, know that our standard of integrity is high and that we are committed to seriously and diligently working to support the public interest, not just the interest with the person who has got the largest charge limit on their gold card.

Yes, Congressman GINGRICH said he was prepared to pass a gift ban, but where is Speaker GINGRICH on this issue? Well, we need look no further than the words again on "Meet the Press" in July, just after the Senate passed the measure this summer of the Republican majority leader DICK ARMEY, and he said, and I quote:

I intend to get a gift ban as soon as we can, but we are going to attend to the Nation's business first. When we have an opportunity, when there is room on the schedule, I want that up, but I am not sure I will find time this year.

I would submit that the gentleman has got the priorities all backward. How is it that we are ever going to get to a fair consideration of the Nation's business unless we have reformed our lobby and gift provisions to assure that the Nation's business is really the business of the people of this country rather than the special interests who have enjoyed too much power here in the Nation's Capital.

Yes, these Republican leaders talk and talk of gift ban and lobby reform, but it seems that all we hear is the whistle of some day. Some day over the rainbow they will get around to really taking action and doing something about meaningful gift ban and lobby reform. I believe that we do not need to go down the yellow brick road with them. What we need to do is to act today, and we will have an opportunity this evening, a second opportunity to do something about the gift ban.

As a new Member of this House, I am committed to constructive change, and my main complaint about the Republican majority, when it comes to the way this House operates, is not that they have changed too much the operation of the House, but they have changed too little. They have never really gotten to grips with the matter of campaign finance reform, lobby reform, or gift ban reform. They are setting the agenda. There is no reason that those items could not have been considered. Indeed, some of us sought to have them considered on the very first day of this Congress.

The time for action is now on meaningful gift ban and lobby reform. Let us get about the public's business.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. DURBIN] is recognized for 5 minutes.

[Mr. DURBIN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.]

CONGRESSIONAL REFORM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from West Virginia [Mr. WISE] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WISE. Welcome back, Mr. Speaker. First day of Congress everybody is back. Kind of like the first day of school, bringing your book bag, your pencils, your agenda, our schedule for the upcoming semester, but there is one problem. You look at the schedule and the schedule does not reflect what you may have heard in the district about what people think ought to be done.

You know, while I was home and participating in town meetings, and particularly a lot of talk shows, there are two questions that came up a lot. Why is there going to be a train wreck, and when the train wreck comes on October 1, because the Federal budget has not been approved and the 137 appropriation bills have not been approved, what is going to happen? That is No. 1. And No. 2 is, when is there going to be some real congressional reform?

Two questions: Why is there going to be a train wreck and when is there going to be true congressional reform?

What is going to be the first bill that this House takes up today to deal with that? It does not deal with the train wreck and it does not deal with congressional reform. The one bill that is going to pass and get sent to the President is a bill that keeps Congress operating. To heck with the rest of the Federal Government, to heck with law enforcement, to heck with the veterans, to heck with sending out the Social Security checks, the heck with health care, the heck with all of that. Keep Congress operating. Keep the Congress budget intact. That is the bill that is being brought to the floor today by the Republican representative illusionary leadership.

Mr. Speaker, I think that people think that Congress ought to stand in line with everybody else, and then if there is going to be a shutdown in Government, Congress ought to be affected in the same way that everybody else is, not putting itself ahead. However, that is bad enough, but if we could make it better, at least attach lobby reform.

I have been interested to hear some of the new Members from the other side of the aisle come down and talk about how they felt lobby reform was important or was not important. They failed to point out that last year lobby reform passed on this House and, as I recall, twice in a bipartisan majority, and sent over to the Senate where it was filibustered by Republican Members.

Let us give the Senate credit this time. They passed lobby reform about a month ago, 98 to zip. That is right, 98 to zero: lobby reform, banning gifts from lobbyists, reining in and stopping the free trips, the junkets and those types of things. They passed it.

What about this House of Representatives? They will not let it be on this